



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

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To elicit interviewee's thoughts on U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan
Interviewees: (Either list interviewees below, attach sign-in sheet to this document or hyperlink to a file)
(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]
SIGAR Attendees:
Candace Rondeaux, Matthew Sternenberger
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Prepared By: (Name, title and date)
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Reviewed By: (Name, title and date)
Key Topics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• Assistance• What Went Wrong• Contract Largess• Elections• Karzai and Corruption• Pakistan and Other Neighbors

Introduction

I naturally look at [U.S. efforts] from a positive angle and compared to 14 years ago, we [Afghanistan] have come a long way. Kabul and the other major cities used to be a ghost cities with no lights. Yes, we have made gains, and generally speaking, life is better for people. Two questions:

1 – **When we compare the gains to the resources, were the gains enough? No.** Afghanistan was a symbol of international cooperation from 2002 to 2005. The world was working together, both friends and foes; it was



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unprecedented international cooperation. We found so many doors, but failed to knock on many of them. In terms of capacity, Afghanistan could not absorb it all. Before 9/11, we could only hope to keep the Taliban at bay.

2 – Were the gains that were made, sustainable? No. Most of the gains remain fragile. I am pleased I have come to New York and sustainable development is a goal of mine. I have a plan with 17 goals and when I interviewed [for this position] I realized that most of the gains over the last 14 years were not sustainable and that makes me look toward the future. I am unsure if we can build on this in the future either in the next 6 months, the next several years, or permanently.

Assistance

I will make sure that Afghanistan remains in the international spotlight. Whatever interest we can create or attract for assistance to Afghanistan must hit the nail on the head and be visible. I am sick of wasted efforts. We have to make sure whatever assistance is targeted properly and that can only happen if we prioritize it right. We have to align international priorities, like the U.S.'s and Japan's, with Afghanistan's. What we can do is create a common priority list that respects national interests and the people of Afghanistan. I am sure that all of our priorities may not be in line, but we need to focus on the exercise at least.

What Went Wrong

There was a lot of emphasis on personalities and forgot that Afghanistan must function as a state. There is an expression: say there is a river here that you need to cross, instead of throwing a stone in it, we are using dirt [to build a temporary step, not permanent]. The [focus should be on] the basic functions of the state; we need to make sure the judicial, executive and legislative branches are working. Instead we thought of Karzai, Marshall Fahim, and Rabbani. There was too much focus on personalities and less on the basic functioning of the state. It is a reality that personalities matter. Today, when we talk to SIGAR or USAID about assistance, we need to talk about strengthening institutions. While we did do this [in the past], but we did not do it as much.

When we spend \$100 billion in Afghanistan, that is a lot of money, and with all that we should be a lot better off than we are now. Today, we still suffer from poverty and unemployment. About 36% [of the Afghan population lives in] poverty. The population is about 30 million and we have 10 million under the poverty line. The World Bank reports that 50% of that 36% are vulnerable. That means malnourished because of the quality of food they eat or the number of meals they consume. [This vulnerable segment of the population] is then roughly about 5 million people or 1 million families. This is our top priority. I worked on this during the campaign and I wanted to know more about unemployment but we have no baseline. Eventually I came up with a rough figure that 40-45% of the unemployment is within the 1 million vulnerable family count. This group is mainly in the rural areas and has a focus on agriculture and animals.

In these rural areas families are identified by the number of goats or sheep they have. It is obvious that we should have done something big in agriculture and animal husbandry. In 2006, we finally started talking about agriculture. The Japanese finally said something. Agriculture is the main backbone of the economy; we have land and labor, but poor water management. We did nothing with animal husbandry. We have poultry in Badakhshan, Baghlan, and Bamyan. Wherever you go in Afghanistan there are signs of animal husbandry. The sheep are good in the north and the camels and cows are good in the south.

I began to wonder if we could come up with a national husbandry and livestock program that can provide subsidies to families that have nothing. I took a drive with a friend and found 50 families in a valley with nothing. We went back to Kabul raised about \$10,000 and went back to the valley and gave each family animals. One year later we went back and like had improved by 50%, especially for women, since husbandry is often work done by women. This [type of program] is an obvious thing that we should have noticed. We need a national livestock program like NSP [National Solidarity Program] and ensure that the ministry has the capacity to manage it. It can be a real game



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changer by providing jobs and reducing unemployment. If we went forward with such a subsidy program, it would cost about \$200 million.

Contract Largess

There was a lot that the military did that could have had linkages to development and civilian life. For example, when I was in charge of New Kabul, I heard that the Americans were a shortcut to get to Bagram outside of the city. I used the Army Corps of Engineers and created a presentation that proposed the road becoming the main road for New Kabul. I shared the map of my plan with the Americans. I said that the road would be 6 carriages wide and be the road of the future. It turns out that the wrong contractor was hired and there were bubbles in the road so they had to then hire a new contractor. My effort [to adjust the road plan] only took a bit of coordination. We need increased dialogue between the security forces and the development project. Building a road is one example when a development project can also help the army.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED] In the end it was obvious that USAID had to talk directly with the faculty and open the horse's mouth to count the teeth. [USAID] could not travel to the locations because of security, but getting USAID the firsthand experience is most important. The faculty had a list of things they needed and they needed the right people with the understanding of the conditions on the ground.

Elections

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED]. Here is what went wrong. It was about international, not national politics, as far as the international community is concerned (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]. The first was the economic transition and how it was in tatters. The second was that we must restore integrity to the electoral system. They, the international community, just said to let it go because they had no idea it could lead to becoming such a big issue. The best they could do in TMAF was a benchmark for elections, considering Karzai did not even want them. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

We pushed toward the elections, and we did well in the first round, but somehow the integrity of the elections became about the integrity of the world. Obama was worried about the elections falling apart and then what [he would have] to say to the taxpayers. After the first round, we were alerted that certain elements and circles switched back to internal politics in Afghanistan. These groups believed it [Afghanistan politics] was about ethnic and linguistic and superiority and believed that those boundaries would be gone if national elections happened. **The 2014 elections were about democracy, legality and rule of law versus illegality and fascists ethnic supremacists who created a myth that only certain groups should rule.** Democratization would shatter that myth, but they said, no they will not allow it. Illegality and ethnic or linguistic supremacist groups did not like the ballot box because it says something different. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

How were we supposed to look at the positive messages of the first round and how were we supposed to explain to people about the mischief that had been done. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED] Then what to do? The positive thing about the international community and the U.S. is that they played an excellent facilitation role which I witnessed firsthand. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED] provided us with a table for both sides to talk. There was not much coming from the U.N. [during the second round]. The UNDP effort was questionable and fishy that the commissioner of the IEC worked with the UNDP and was installed by Karzai. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)



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(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [John] Kerry was good and I believe he wanted to do good. There was so much money that went into the audit(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

The ERC was established nine months late but the composition of its membership was good. It produced a recommendation for the short term and the government accepted most of them. [The ERC] is working but faces resistance every day from those that fear the ballot box. There are constant battles. Personally, Ghani hates fraud, corruption, and illegality.

Karzai and Corruption

I think the fraud had a lot to do with Karzai and his comfort with tribalism instead of rule of law. In 2002-2005 we drafted laws and Karzai emerged as the elected president and was supposed to work within those laws but did not because they tied his hands. He didn't like it and in order to continue his power and remain in power he held a traditional instead of a constitutional Loya Jirga. He started breaching articles of the constitution in 2009 and during the end of his presidency. It was Karzai who appointed the IEC authorities and three were clearly biased toward the idea of ethnic superiority. The head of the ECC also said that Afghanistan only belongs to some people. The Kunduz issue was inherited from Karzai - who let them setup there? Who released the prisoners who would then go on to lead the Kunduz fight? All this said, we still treat him like a former head of state. His legacy is that didn't torture the [political] opposition. He didn't push the country toward functioning, instead he just wanted power, to be chief. **"With all of this corruption in Afghanistan, no minister or member of the Karzai family went to prison."** There still is a lot of corruption and both Ghani and Abdullah have no patience for corruption. The noose is tightening on the corrupt elements. The unprecedented spring offensive [by the Taliban] did not give the New Unity Government enough time to focus on setting itself up.

Pakistan and Other Neighbors

It is very simple, the tension between India and Pakistan took deep roots and India-phobia is strong in Pakistan (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

India is in the back of the mind of every Pakistani. If the Afghanistan and Pakistan relationship is seen through the Islamabad-New Delhi relationship, god save us all.

There is deep animosity by India and Pakistan and internal Pakistan tension with the [Pakistan] military. The military needs to justify its lion share of the budget [so the issues of] Kashmir and Afghanistan will persist. Also, the Indian subcontinent was ruled by the British for centuries and some Pakistanis want to subjugate us [Afghans]. They are looking for weak elements in Kabul. The Punjabis look at Afghans like they are an uncivilized people. Over the past six or seven years the trust deficit has kept growing and an accumulation of events have made that gap wider. Even good policy in Islamabad is seen as bad in Kabul. The trust deficit started here, in New York, with the Pakistan vote at the U.N. Afghanistan voted against Pakistan statehood but the negative vote against statehood was not about what Afghanistan really wanted. The mission could not reach Kabul for a decision and so they asked the [Afghan] Ambassador to London and he said to vote negatively - a decision overturned 48 hours later by Kabul.

Another issue is the Durand line and the local politics. [Mohammaed] Daoud Khan wanted to come out strong [after the ousting of Mohammed] Zahir Shah so he talked about the Durand line. We, Afghans, were jumping up and down saying that we didn't recognize the line, but have also never offered a solution. We must put this behind us and we must have a recognized border. We need to find a dignified way out for the Pakistanis.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) Now as for the concept of using violence in pursuit of political objectives - the Pakistanis are right to be concerned with their national objectives, but they have no right to use violence. Pakistan can't be allowed to play this game. What if we play this



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game by also using India against Pakistan instead of addressing the problem? We are not hitting the nail on the head but instead twisting them to our advantage.

We need a healthy dialogue between major powers (like Russia, India, and China) (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We have a responsibility to the next generation. Karzai never had regional dialogue, but was always asking for their assistance. The New Unity Government is indicating that it is ready for dialogue on water issues (either bilaterally or multilaterally). It is better to keep the region engaged. We need to have dialogue even if it is not rapid, but we need to at least tell others about our interests and hear about theirs.